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SUBJECT: KABILA MEETS AUGUST 5 WITH DONOR COMMUNITY ON DEVELOPMENT
ISSUES FOR FIRST TIME SINCE ELECTION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: President Joseph Kabila convoked bilateral and multilateral development partners August 5 to assess progress on his development priorities and to review social and economic development issues. This meeting was significant as it was President Kabila's first encounter with the international community on development issues since his election in late 2006. The genesis of the meeting was a discussion between Kabila and P3+2 ambassadors over mutual frustrations with the pace of development progress. Some tangible progress has been made in upgrading the Congo's infrastructure, improving its health care and expanding the national education system since Kabila's election, yet there is consensus that development programs must be accelerated. The president may also feel he is under political pressure to step up the pace of development so he can point to real gains in time for the 2011 elections. An informal translation of the official communique on the meeting is at para. 9; the original text in French is at para. ¶10. End summary.

Kabila and his "cinq chantiers"

¶2. (U) In October 2006, then-candidate Joseph Kabila announced that as president his economic development plan would focus on progress in "cinq chantiers" (literally "five work areas") or prioritized sectors: education, health, infrastructure, water and electricity, and job creation. Promising big changes and reform within the context of democracy and free trade, he raised the hopes of millions of Congolese who were (and still are) living in dire poverty. Two years later, progress on the five development priorities has been less than anticipated.

¶3. (U) On August 5 Kabila convened a meeting attended by high-level members of his economic development team, and representatives of the World Bank, the IMF, the European Commission, the European Union, the UN, the African Development Bank (ADB), as well as representatives of the United States, the UK, China, Japan, France, Germany and South Africa, among others. The main goals of the meeting as billed by its organizers were to present and evaluate exactly which programs are in place to accelerate economic and social development, which strategies for development are working and what are not, as well as how the overall efficiency of assistance programs can be improved.

Government, donors report on problems

¶4. (U) GDRC representatives highlighted progress to date as well as challenges. The Minister of Finance reported on significant commitments of foreign assistance. With reference to programs of the World Bank, African Development Bank and the European Community, he noted substantial lags between commitments and disbursements and showed how assistance tends to be concentrated in places such as Kinshasa, rather than flowing to the provinces with the highest levels of poverty. The Planning Minister described improvements in donor coordination processes, consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The Minister of Infrastructure and Public Works gave details of actual and planned investments in transportation infrastructure, showing how Western and Chinese

investments will complement one-another.

¶15. (U) Statements by SRSG Alan Doss, French Ambassador Bernard Prevost (speaking on behalf of bilateral donors), and World Bank Director Marie Françoise Marie-Nelly stressed the donors' commitment to work with the GDRC, identified constraints to effective program implementation and proposed measures to improve coordination and to achieve quick wins.

¶16. (U) President Kabila affirmed his desire to hold two or three such meetings each year, and was quick to distinguish these consultations from the processes of the transitional period. He noted that security and stability are essential for the development agenda to succeed, making explicit reference to Eastern Congo. He stated his belief that the DRC's relations with China and the West can be reconciled and that related issues surrounding HIPC debt relief can be resolved.

Outcomes

¶17. (U) Outcomes of the meeting will include a Performance Agreement that will summarize principles of development cooperation between the GDRC and the international community and an Action Plan for follow-up. The Action Plan is still under discussion but includes processes to accelerate the implementation of development programs and improve communication. There is also a consensus that two or three quick wins should be identified in each of the President's "cing chantiers." Measures under discussion include, among others: increasing primary school enrollments by 1 million in September 2008 and an additional 1 million in September 2009; distributing 20 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets by the end of 2009 to combat malaria; and restoring generating capacity of the Inga

hydroelectric complex according to fixed targets.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: The meeting was seen as productive and some concrete measures to reform existing development programs were put forward, as noted above. President Kabila pledged to convene a meeting before the end of the year to continue to evaluate development programs. The meeting was significant in so far as it was the first time the President has met with the development community on development issues since his election in late 2006. Moreover, it may help to clear the path for more effective use of development resources. Simple politics seems to have been factor in Kabila's decision to hold this meeting. Although there are some tangible results to show for his campaign promises, Kabila realizes that time is running out and he needs greater donor community support to achieve progress on his five prioritized spheres of development if he is to recover popular support for re-election in ¶2011. In this connection, we note that the meeting was given ample media coverage. End comment.

¶19. (U) Following is an unofficial Mission translation of the official communique issued shortly after the meeting.

BEGIN TRANSLATION OF COMMUNIQUE:

On Tuesday August 5, 2008, His Excellency, Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo met with bilateral development partners to take stock of progress on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and, in particular, on the implementation of the nation's five priority areas for development [education, health, infrastructure, water and electricity, and the creation of jobs]. The principal objectives of this high-level meeting were to assess the effectiveness of aid through projects funded by partners and progress in the fight against poverty, as well as to search for possible ways and means to more quickly implement programs in these five priority sectors.

Several themes relating to the daily lives of the Congolese people were addressed. These include, notably, the improvement in:

- Access to primary schools for all children and, in particular, as early as the beginning of this coming term, September 2008;
- Access to primary health care and the reduction of the incidence of malaria and HIV/AIDS;
- Access to potable water and electricity;

- The state of infrastructure (roads, agricultural trails, inland waterways, railways) in order to develop economic activity and reduce the cost of transporting merchandise.

It was therefore agreed to:

- Accelerate reforms in priority sectors;
- To improve and simplify the procedures regarding the implementation of programs and projects of partners;
- To step up efforts toward good economic governance;
- To concentrate support from partners into the government's priority sectors;
- To better utilize the services of national institutions and to strengthen them;
- To assess the progress of the DSCR, the Priority Action Plan (PAP) and the five priority sectors every quarter;
- To better inform the public on current development projects;
- To develop a performance agreement aiming to accelerate aid effectiveness in the DRC.

Finally, this meeting was an important opportunity to reaffirm the common will of both Congolese institutions and development partners to work together in a spirit of mutual respect and complementarity.

End translation of communiqué

10. (U) Following is original text in French of communiqué.

Begin original text:

CE MARDI 5 AOUT 2008, SON EXCELLENCE MONSIEUR JOSEPH KABILA, PRESIDENT DE LA REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, A RENCONTRE LES PARTENAIRES AU DEVELOPPEMENT POUR FAIRE LE POINT SUR L'ETAT D'AVANCEMENT DU DSCR ET EN PARTICULIER DES CINQ CHANTIERS DE LA REPUBLIQUE. LA RECHERCHE DE L'EFFICACITE DE L'AIDE, A TRAVERS LES PROJETS FINANCES PAR LES PARTENAIRES, LA LUTTE CONTRE LA PAUVRETE ET LA RECHERCHE DES VOIES ET MOYENS POUR ACCELERER LA MISE EN OUVRE DES 5 CHANTIERS DE LA REPUBLIQUE ONT CONSTITUE LES PRINCIPAUX OBJECTIFS DE CETTE RENCONTRE DE HAUT NIVEAU.

PLUSIEURS THEMES TOUCHANT A LA VIE QUOTIDIENNE DES CONGOLAIS ONT AINSI ETE ABORDES. IL S'AGIT NOTAMMENT DE L'AMELIORATION DE :

-L'ACCES A L'ECOLE PRIMAIRE EN PARTICULIER ET CE, DES LA RENTREE DE SEPTEMBRE 2008 ;

-L'ACCES AUX SOINS DE SANTE PRIMAIRE ET LA REDUCTION DE L'INCIDENCE DE LA MALARIA ET DU VIH/SIDA ;

-L'ACCES A L'EAU POTABLE ET A L'ELECTRICITE ;

-L'ETAT DES INFRASTRUCTURES (ROUTES, PISTES AGRICOLES, VOIE NAVIGABLES, CHEMIN DE FER) POUR DEVELOPPER L'ACTIVITE ECONOMIQUE ET REDUIRE LES COUTS DE TRANSPORT DES MARCHANDISES.

POUR CELA, IL A ETE CONVENU :

-D'ACCELERER LES REFORMES DANS CES SECTEURS PRIORITAIRES ;

-D'AMELIORER ET SIMPLIFIER LES PROCEDURES DE MISE EN OUVRE DES PROGRAMMES ET PROJETS DES PARTENAIRES ;

-D'ACCELERER LES EFFETS EN MATIERE DE BONNE GOUVERNANCE ECONOMIQUE ;

-DE CONCENTRER LES APPUIS DE PARTENAIRES SUR LES SECTEURS PRIORITAIRES DU GOUVERNEMENT ;

-DE MIEUX UTILISER LES SERVICES DES INSTITUTIONS NATIONALES ET DE LES RENFORCER ;

-DE FAIRE LE POINT CHAQUE TRIMESTRE POUR VERIFIER L'ETAT D'AVANCEMENT DU DSCR, DU PAP ET DES CINQ CHANTIERS ;

-DE MIEUX INFORMER LA POPULATION DES REALISATIONS EN COURS.

-D'ELABORER UN PACTE DE PERFORMANCE POUR ACCELERER L'EFFICACITE DE L'AIDE EN RDC.

CETTE RENCONTRE A FINALEMENT ETE L'OCCASION DE REAFFIRMER LA VOLONTE COMMUNE DES INSTITUTIONS CONGOLAISES ET DES PARTENAIRES AU DEVELOPPEMENT D'OUVRER DANS UN ESPRIT DE RESPECT MUTUEL ET DE COMPLEMENTARITE ".

End communiqué

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